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ABSTRACT

This monograph examines the extent to which Lord Northcliffe, generally conceded to be the dominant force in the popularization of journalism in Britain and what was once the British Empire, influenced or was influenced by American developments in journalism. The first section, entitled "The Legacy," briefly reviews the popular press in England. The remaining sections of the monograph afford a biographical sketch of Lord Northcliffe and a discussion of his career, with emphasis given to his influence by and on American journalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. (LL)

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ROBERT N. PIERCE

Lord Northcliffe: Trans-Atlantic Influences

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ROBERT N. PIERCE

Lord Northcliffe: Trans-Atlantic Influences

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Preface

A EUROPEAN historian of journalism examining the surveys his American counterparts have written could not escape the conclusion that a sort of scholarly embargo is and always has been in effect. Aside from the attention that Bleyer and Emery have given to the prenatal development of our press in its 17th-Century Continental and English phase and that Hohenberg devotes to the spread of press freedom and foreign correspondence, nearly nothing is said in the standard works about the possibility that the dynamics of change may have been contagious enough to cross national borders.[1]*

Passing mention is made of the influences of the 18th-Century English essayists and political theorists, the Bow Street police reporting of the 1830s and the international news cartel. With one exception, what is perhaps the most significant journalistic development of the last century and a half—the popularization of the press—is described by default as an exclusively American phenomenon. No doubt this interpretation reflects the paucity of research on possible trans-Atlantic interrelationships during this period. There is ample evidence that Europe's transformations were similar if not identical to those of the United States in the political, economic, social and journalistic fields, and it is reasonable to propose that the development of the press on both sides of the ocean may have shared not only common roots but contemporary impulses.

The exception to the embargo noted above concerns Alfred Charles William Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe,[2] who is generally conceded to be the dominant force in the popularization of journalism in Britain and in what was once the British Empire. Emery and Mott each devote about one page to his accomplishments.[3]

If a beginning is to be made in the internationalization of journalism history, an examination of the extent to which he influenced or was influenced by American developments may be an appropriate point of departure.

* See *Notes* at end.

The Legacy

EVEN BEFORE the dawn of the newspaper era, critics of the English press were sniffing at its sensationalism. The broadsheet ballads were so popular, one critic wrote, that "scarce a cat can look out of a gutter, but out starts a half-peny Chronicler, and presently *a propper ballet of a strange sight is endited.*"[4] Three centuries later, when Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, offended the sensibilities of Fleet Street with his flippant new *Daily Mail,* it earned the label of "that vulgar little halfpenny paper" and "a newspaper for office boys written by office boys."[5]

If the development of the popular press had been continuous in that span of time, it is doubtful that its plainer sister, journalism appealing to the intellect, would have been able to compete for nourishment. But the lustiness of the balladeers was soon to go into eclipse, never fully re-emerging until Northcliffe rediscovered it.

Anxieties over a continental war led to serious rather than light material as the grist for the earliest news publications, the corantos. Within two decades, another topic that would preoccupy most editors until Northcliffe—politics—came into its own. Class conflict that surged during the Stuart period and led to a steady downward shift of power had reached the point by the late 19th Century where the common man might afford a newspaper and be able to read it.

Even at the beginning of this long transition, not all in the poorer classes were outside the circle of news consumers. A judge in Charles II's reign complained during a sedition trial that "so fond are men in these days that when they will deny their children a penny for bread, they will lay it out for a pamphlet; and the temptations are so great that no man can keep twopence in his pocket because of the news."[6]

The strain of personalism that marked Northcliffe's success can be traced at least as far back as 1690, when London bookseller

John Dunton began a weekly that was often made up entirely of questions and answers about the problems of the lovelorn. Three years later a similar periodical, this time frankly aimed at women readers, began publication.[7]

The great editors of essay papers, Addison, Steele and Defoe, tended to be bored with politics but also ridiculed the early gropings toward sensationalism. They found a ready market in the middle class for witty, urbane commentary on literature and social life. In the *Spectator,* Addison wrote:

> As, on the one Side, my Paper has not in it a single Word of News, a Reflection in Politicks, nor a Stroke of Party; so, on the other, there are no fashionable Touches of Infidelity; no obscene Ideas, no [satires] upon Priesthood, Marriage and the like popular Topicks of Ridicule. . . .[8]

A Century of Reform

The liberalizing trends of the Napoleonic period and its aftermath were reflected in the rise of the British press as an instrument of public opinion, climaxing in the Reform Bill of 1832, which substantially enlarged the electorate. The same spirit of democracy led Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton to propose in the House of Commons that year at least reduction in the taxes that had kept the newspaper effectively out of the hands of common men. In doing so, he called up the example of the North American press, then in the midst of the Jacksonian revolution and soon to enter its Penny Press period. He noted that Britain had one newspaper copy per 36 inhabitants, whereas Pennsylvania had one for every four.

> We have heard enough in this House of the necessity of legislating for property and intelligence, but we now feel the necessity of legislating for poverty and intelligence. At present we are acquainted with the poorer part of our fellow-countrymen only by their wrongs and murmurs, their misfortunes and their crimes. But let us at last open happier and wiser channels of communication between them and us.[9]

The next year, taxes on advertisements were drastically lowered and those on newspapers were reduced to a penny a copy, equivalent to about two cents in the U.S. This was still enough to prevent British publishers from inaugurating their equivalent of the U. S. Penny Press, and the typical sale price dropped only to fivepence. There was steady expansion of the reformist and inde-

pendent news functions of the newspapers, but they reached only the upper and, to some extent, the middle classes.

The disappearance of the "taxes on knowledge" with legislation of 1855 and 1861 led to the founding of penny papers which were moderately successful, but curiously their proprietors kept their feet in the same path their predecessors had followed, scarcely catering to a mass audience.[10] The most notable entry was the *Daily Telegraph,* the first penny paper, and it was designed for the middle classes. "The lower classes . . . had no newspaper at all."[11]

The *Telegraph* did borrow some American techniques, particularly in replacing the tiny label heads used in Britain with the multi-deck headlines stimulated in the United States by the Civil War. As late as 1865 London papers were using single 10-point heads on major news stories, and the *Telegraph* was considered still an innovator when it used 10 decks on the momentous Battle of Sedan in 1870. The New York *Herald* had used a full column of heads on the assassination of Lincoln.[12]

The Education Act adopted by Parliament in 1870 had an impact similar to such changes in the United States in providing a potential new audience for newspapers which were willing to seek its favor. However, no success on the magnitude of Joseph Pulitzer's New York *World* occurred in Britain for more than two decades.

W. T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the 1880s, pioneered in investigative reporting of a sort that distinguished some New York papers after the Civil War. "When Stead saw that a thing required to be done he campaigned for it with a vigour and urgency that no one has ever excelled. He had a gift of the flashing, picturesque phrase, and he had the compelling ardour that springs from absolute conviction in the rightness of a cause."[13]

Stead climaxed a series of shocking and sometimes successful crusades with one on white slavery in which he proved his point by posing as a customer—only to a circumspect degree, however. Even though the series resulted in corrective legislation, he was sent to jail for three months on the technical charge of abducting a girl. One account notes that Stead's "flamboyant policy was ahead of its time, but as an inspirer of the livelier trend in news-

paper editing he could claim some of the credit later given to Alfred Harmsworth."[14]

Also enjoying limited success in the late 1880s was T. P. O'Connor of the *Star,* who used American-style headlines and emphasized conciseness and personalism. A journal article he wrote in 1889, entitled "The New Journalism," defended and conceptualized the revolution which was to prevail.[15] An effort by the younger James Gordon Bennett to extend the domain of his Paris *Herald* into a London edition was pursued for a year before its collapse in 1890.[16] Andrew Carnegie, flushed with his American industrial conquests, made a short-lived effort in the same period to become a figure in London publishing.[17]

The Pioneer

In the more shallow characterizations of Lord Northcliffe's place in journalism history, his greatest distinction is said to be either the founding of the *Daily Mail* or the ownership and financial rescue of the *Times* of London. The *Mail* has since receded in relative importance, and scarcely had Northcliffe been buried than the *Times* passed into more fastidious hands. It is in broader strokes than these that his role must be depicted.

The more serious biographers generally agree with the one who calls him the founder of the modern popular press in England, the man who "corrected the pompous pose" of its newspapers.[18] This is not to say that he was a revolutionary; rather, like Hearst, he exploited possibilities which others had revealed.

He caused a daily paper to be read by millions whose fathers, even if they could read at all, were ignored by editors. He was a pioneer rather than the originator of this social revolution. There had been others before him in America and in Britain. But they had experimented where he succeeded in stamping his personality on the popular press.[19]

The new multitudes possessing literacy if not true education had emerged during Northcliffe's boyhood; in effect, the class had grown up with him, and he understood it. "He foresaw the millions of new questioning minds, wanting to know in easy language the answers to Why? How? Where?"[20]

The eldest of 14 children of a failure-prone London barrister, Northcliffe early developed his assertiveness by ruling his younger siblings. He displayed a strong tendency toward Victorian achievement orientation, not by conforming to a rounded model but by capitalizing on his passions, notably schemes to sell things to neighbors, forays into personal journalism in the school newspaper he founded, and leadership in the bicycle craze then emerging. He read books hungrily and taught himself piano but disdained academic tasks.[21]

One of his subordinates on the school paper commented: "He throws out the idea, and leaves the very trifling details to be worked out by inferior minds."[22] H. G. Wells, later a teacher at the school, was to look back on those years:

> I saw enough of Lord Northcliffe to see the extraordinary mental and moral conflicts created by the real vastness of the opportunities and challenges that crowded in on him on the one hand, and on the other, the blank inadequacy of his education . . . for anything better than a career of push and acquisition.[23]

But his intellectual superficiality was to prove an invaluable asset, because it freed him from the necessity of spending time and energy on unprofitable thinking. His first successful publication, *Answers to Correspondents,* based its appeal on interesting trivia, much of it pouring out of the vast supply of factual information on the shelves of Northcliffe's mind. Like his typical reader, he could not put these facts together into a meaningful whole, he lacked the power of sustained thought or abstraction and "he saw his objects always near, never on the horizon."[24]

It is significant that Northcliffe is not remembered for espousal of any particular political doctrines, despite the thousands of editorials that filled their expected places in his publications. When he did unburden himself on political matters, the expression was more often a sentiment than an opinion. Even his brother Cecil wrote that he had often wondered what Northcliffe's political position really was and that his chief inspiration seemed to be "a firm faith in the Anglo-Saxon future."[25]

Thus Northcliffe turned his considerable powers to one task—becoming the master of popular journalism, focusing on people rather than things, "for he was a realist who knew the things that lie nearest the human heart."[26] He could also develop highly workable strategies based on simple principles, such as his belief that only two motivations caused people to read a newspaper—curiosity and habit.[27]

One close associate summed up four characteristics that impressed themselves on anyone working around Northcliffe:

1) His ambition for power through his newspapers, though not necessarily for money;

2) His "Britishness," which did not prevent his working always for closer amity between the English-speaking peoples;

3) His volcanic intolerance of slipshod work of any sort, whether in his own businesses or elsewhere;

4) His uncanny instinct, which he called his "sixth sense."[28]

A Limit to Excesses

Because Northcliffe launched into newspaper journalism only a year or so before the worst excesses of the Pulitzer-Hearst competition, it is inevitable that he would be accused of bringing Yellow Journalism to London. Although no systematic information on the matter is available, Northcliffe's biographers tend to agree that he stopped short of the depths reached in New York.[29] "Sensationalism is not necessarily exaggeration or untruth. In the Harmsworth press it was the violent energy of a new generation challenging the smug assumptions and methods of the old."[30]

Nevertheless, Northcliffe's stock in trade was his adeptness at manipulating circulation-building techniques. His newspapers did not compete with the other daily journals but rather with paperback novels—the "penny dreadfuls"—and with broadsheet ballads. Soon after buying his first paper he mused that "a real good murder mystery would be the making of us."[31]

Northcliffe was bringing to Fleet Street something that Park Row had already learned: the only thing that would beat a sensational crime story was one that was exclusive. He pounded home the need for such feats to his editors:

> Crime exclusives are *noticed* by the public more than any other sort of news. They attract attention, which is the secret of newspaper success.
>
> The Chief went on to say that the duty of those in editorial control of a newspaper was to have one big feature every day . . . a big news feature, something different from what the other papers had. . . . He was especially keen on what he called "personal stories," especially about people in high places.[32]

It has been argued that the most important technique of the era—"one of the most far-reaching inventions of an inventive age"—was the paragraph, or the brief epigrammatic story. Northcliffe, who rode it to his early fame, credited its origin to Edmund Yates of the *World* of London.[33]

But the trend-setting of other ideas is laid with little dispute directly to Northcliffe. One was the serial story idea, which soared in popularity in the 1890s; Northcliffe had tried it out first in 1889

in *Answers,* when he exposed conditions of prison life. Another was the use of comic strips, then getting started in the Pulitzer and Hearst papers. Both devices were common in the United States before Northcliffe's career; the serial story can be traced back at least to the widespread serialization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the 1850s, and sequential comic pictures appeared in the 1870s and 1880s. However, like Pulitzer, Northcliffe had an aversion to newspaper illustration in general, declaring it was "unnecessary, a mere matter of habit."[34]

Innovations in Publishing

Although Northcliffe was a poor business manager, like his American alter-egos, his penchant for innovation spilled over into this field. He originated audited circulations in England, a "bold stroke of publishing policy which echoed down the years," and thus he outmaneuvered his competitors not only for sales but for proven honesty in reporting them. Northcliffe was publishing auditors' statements as early as 1892, and the first tentative, unsuccessful efforts in this direction in the United States date from 1893.[35]

One of the few times when Northcliffe made a false step was also a rare case of his following another publisher's lead. The *Daily Telegraph* started a Sunday edition in 1899, polluting the Sabbath with ink for the first time, and Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* anxiously reacted by doing the same. The innovation lasted less than two months before both papers had to "bow before the storm of public resentment worked up by religious leaders who fought stoutly for the puritan legacy of the English Sabbath, with its millions lounging about in consecrated idleness."[36]

Northcliffe disliked advertising as much as he did illustrations, but he easily overcame this phobia. He was particularly pacesetting in the use of display advertisements as a supplement to the solidly set classifieds of earlier tradition. In doing so, he worked closely with the new agencies which were springing up concurrently on both sides of the Atlantic.[37] The profits that this added to his already large circulation income allowed him to pay the highest salaries on Fleet Street and to boast in print about it.[38]

In a sense, Northcliffe embodied two transformations which swept the press in the United States—the popularization of the 1830s, which England largely missed because of the "taxes on

knowledge," and the sensationalism of the 1890s. Thus an impact which was mitigated by the passage of two-thirds of a century in one country was felt all the harder in the other because it was so compressed.

Northcliffe, almost alone, proved to England that "a press, economically independent and free from political and official interference, can flourish under democracy as it had done in an earlier society of privileged classes and limited literacy."[39] But winning respect and confidence along with attention was another matter, and therein lies the limit of his success.

The Borrower

NORTHCLIFFE was born into a society pulsing with opportunities for change, and he showed an unparalleled adeptness at exploiting these openings. But were there factors in his success that transcended national boundaries? Do these factors arrange themselves into any patterns that can lead to a new conceptualization of the way in which the British and American media systems came to be what they are?

Such patterns, if they exist, must be drawn from a close examination of the points in Northcliffe's career at which he came in contact with American or other foreign journalistic activities or ideas. British biographers and historians have been as neglectful of this question as their American counterparts, but relevant evidence can be found through a diligent search of the material. Perhaps to a greater extent than is the case with Pulitzer and Hearst, Northcliffe was not so much an element in the popularization as the vehicle for the change. Thus it seems appropriate to examine these trans-Atlantic impulses chronologically in the context of this one career.

A Success With Trivia

After leaving school at 16, Northcliffe declined his father's urgings to study law or enter a university. Instead he began a rapid ascent of his own making in the field of publishing, first as a free-lancer on popular magazines, then as editor of a bicycling magazine and co-founder of a small publishing house that subsisted partly on shallow self-help books Northcliffe wrote. He made vivid impressions on Fleet Streeters by his brashness, good looks and fashionable clothes. Perhaps his first direct contact with American journalism was his struggling firm's efforts to distribute an American sporting magazine in Britain.[40]

Northcliffe's breakthrough to editorial and financial success came within less than a year after he founded a weekly feature

paper, *Answers to Correspondents,*[41] in 1888. A seedbed of all the reader-service letter columns that were to crowd newspapers later, it was inspired by one department of a highly successful weekly of the period, *Tit-Bits,* published by George Newnes. The elements of its success apparently were ingenious promotion stunts; terse, simple writing; and empathy with the needs of the newly emergent reader group. It placed little reliance on display, illustrations and advertisements. Northcliffe no doubt was aware of an American publication, *Queries,* which had failed in 1887 to exploit the market Northcliffe later capitalized on.[42]

None of the accounts of this period of Northcliffe's life indicates that he had any substantial interest in the news aspects of the New Journalism as practiced by Pulitzer and his imitators in the United States.[43] The young Englishman's ambitions seem to have been focused exclusively on non-daily feature publications, and he drew on American newspapers and magazines for amusing or bizarre tales which he and his wife rewrote for English readers. One biographer implies that this practice was based on the convenience of not having to pay contributors, as such material was easily available for a price at home.[44]

Adapting American Models

Northcliffe spent the six years after the founding of *Answers* spawning a plethora of magazines, most of them almost instantly successful. He and his staff continued to lift both ideas and material from American sources, even to the point of admiring the sensational American-style display in the Salvation Army *War Cry.* He took up the idea of giving life insurance to winners of promotional contests after seeing the prosperity it brought Newnes, but he insisted that Americans had used the scheme before his competitor had. The stunt is known to have been used by the Lynn (Massachusetts) *Daily Press* as early as the 1890s, but Newnes had made the same offer in 1889. The boom in *Answers'* circulation brought on by a puzzle craze was known to have germinated in an idea by an American.[45]

By the early 1890s Northcliffe was being compared publicly in Britain with his American counterparts. Although "America is supposed to be monopolizing the publication of English literature," the Manchester *Guardian* wrote, "the attainment of the largest circulation of periodical journalism in the world can be

ascribed to a British editor."[46] He was said to have been observing the development of Pulitzer's *World* and the younger Bennett's Paris *Herald,* as well as its short-lived London edition,[47] but his first sustained study of American newspapers appears to have come in a trip throughout the U. S. Eastern seaboard in early 1894.

> His visit to New York was unnoticed by all of the local newspapers. . . . Some . . . publishers who were told of Harmsworth's success were highly skeptical, and were unable to believe that a mere youth had started some cheap papers and had made a large fortune in less than five years. . . .[48]

This did not deter him from calling on the publishers, touring their plants and making a close comparative analysis of their newspapers. More impressed with him were officers of a circulation agency; during lunch with them he was handed a cable announcing *Answers'* sales had reached 350,000.[49]

The available evidence does not indicate that Northcliffe seriously entertained the idea of entering the mainstream of London newspaper publishing, even after his return from the United States.[50] But when there arose the opportunity to buy a tottering paper, the London *Evening News,* for a bargain price that year, he was ready to take the plunge. The methods he used to revolutionize the paper's contents and its fortunes grew out of his own experience with magazines, the English newspapermen he hired, and American-style headlines.

> A cautious effort [was] being made in these early copies of the *Evening News* to introduce a system of vivid headlines which had already gone some way in America and which was ultimately to dominate every page of mass-circulating journals. There [was] an old-world charm about the technique of the sub-editors who made these tentative essays in the *Evening News* of the nineties.[51]

Other innovations with the paper were introduction of new type; shortening and diversification of editorials; banishing the tediously written political news traditional with English papers; a women's page; establishment of the paper's own football gambling pool, predating the tip sheets of later years; and liberal lifting of feature articles from back issues of *Answers.*[52]

From Magazines to Newspapers

From this point on, magazines nearly always were secondary to newspapers in Northcliffe's interests; he could rely on various of

his brothers to keep running the many moneymaking periodicals he had started. Only a few months after the *Evening News* purchase, he exposed himself to one of the few foreign influences he encountered aside from the American ones. While vacationing in Paris, he had several talks with the publisher of the four-page *Le Petit Journal*, then selling 650,000 copies daily—more than the total for all the London dailies together—and making huge profits.[53]

Le Petit Journal had an immediate impact on Northcliffe's strategy, although his recent success with the *Evening News* and his American trip may have contributed to his decision. At any rate, when he returned from Paris he drafted a plan for what was to be the most imposing journalistic monument of his career, the *Daily Mail*. Although it followed the traditional format of having a front ("cover") page filled with classified advertising, with its main news and editorial pages at the centerfold, it clearly was a heathen invasion of the morning papers' cathedral of dullness.

> There was nothing to startle the attention in his new daily, designed though it was to be of "the greatest interest to the greatest number." Yet its crisply edited news pages seemed to reflect a sense of the adventure of living at the dawn of a new century. To a printer's eye it had more "white" in it than was usual among newspapers then. To a visitor from New York, it might have been more than a casual reminder of Charles A. Dana's *Sun*, which had been far ahead in the art of news condensation.[54]

Although more serious in purpose than the *Evening News*, the new morning paper carried over many of the same techniques, particularly in making political news more readable. Referring to the *Mail's* predecessors, one commentator recalled that "no one with a zest for news or views could face those rows of solid columns of the smallest print. It would be true on the whole to say that Alfred Harmsworth changed all that."[55] Northcliffe's posture as a schoolmaster to his reporters was reminiscent of Pulitzer's. He trained them in the use of the summary lead and insisted that maps be used. "Explain, simplify, clarify!" he exhorted them. The first foreign correspondents in what was to become a global network were stationed in New York and Paris even before the *Daily Mail* started publication.[56]

Even Northcliffe's personal style seemed exotic to his sub-

ordinates, and the Hearstian vigor and imperiousness set him apart from other British editors:

> A printing trade paper commented in the year 1900: "The American custom of calling a chief editor 'The Chief' seems to be spreading in British journalism. We rather like it." It did not spread far. . . . There was no one else then, or after, to give it the same compelling sanction as Alfred Harmsworth.[57]

Presbrey has cited the birth of the *Daily Mail* as a turning point for British newspaper advertising because it defied inhibitions against display type, broken column rules and illustrations in ads. Northcliffe was responding to the advertisers' desire to replicate in newspapers the success they had gained with bold billboard displays, and the *Mail's* policy so pleased the space buyers that they stepped up their campaigns and thus generated more lineage for all publications.[58]

Northcliffe's imitation of American advertising techniques also brought along the breezy, second-person copywriting style, but this did not travel across the ocean as well as the mechanical forms. The more conservative advertisers soon gave up on their experiment with vigorous wording and returned to a general tone of earnest reserve.[59]

From the founding of the *Daily Mail* onward, Northcliffe displayed a keen awareness of how his publications compared with those in America. Planning the establishment of *Harmsworth's Magazine* in 1898, he write a brother: "I have been studying all the magazines, English and American, closely. Except in printing matters, I shall be amazed if we cannot get the first place."[60]

American printing technology had both a pragmatic and a symbolic significance for Northcliffe. Throughout his life he was torn between his pride in things British and his realism as to what worked best. As a teenaged bicycling magazine editor, he was closely involved with printing and "learned to look across the Atlantic for many of his mechanical inspirations." Although not as thoroughgoing a technician as Hearst was, he was continually thrilled with the blossoming of the machine age. Every time he visited the United States he gleefully brought back mechanical toys and novelties.[61] He ruefully remarked to an American visitor early in his career that "if we were as go-ahead as your people" British publishing offices would have adopted the tele-

phone by that time.[62] Writing in the first issue of the *Daily Mail,* he bragged of the compactness made possible by new technology:

> Our stereotyping arrangements, engines and machines are of the latest English and American construction, and it is the use of these inventions on a scale unprecedented in any English newspaper that enables the *Daily Mail* to effect a saving of from 30 to 50 per cent, and be sold for half the price of its contemporaries.[63]

A few months later he apologized to stockholders about the need to use French and American machines because of their superiority to British products.[64]

Hiring American Personnel

A medium of contact which both demonstrated Northcliffe's regard for American journalism and provided a continuing source of influence was his penchant for importing talent from the United States. A former employee notes:

> The methods of American business men, the energy and enterprise of American journalists, had powerfully impressed Northcliffe in his early visits to the United States, and there came a time when his frequent transatlantic trips were regarded with some apprehension by his . . . colleagues. . . . [Occasionally] the Chief returned . . . with a bright new American journalist, who was to set Fleet Street in a flutter, or treasuring some new American stunt that was to do great things for the *Mail* or the Amalgamated Press.[65]

In his early years as a newspaper publisher, Northcliffe tended to concentrate on reporters and artists as imports. Even though some turned out to be poor choices, he also lured away some of the best, such as correspondents Richard Harding Davis and Julian Ralph. He paid Davis the signal honor of sending him to replace the widely admired Englishman, G. W. Steevens, as the *Mail* correspondent in the Boer War after Steevens' death at the front. Two artists who brought over techniques then popular in America were Penrhyn Stanlaws, an illustrator, and Charles Balch, a specialist in editorial stunts.[66]

Acquisitions at the executive level also produced a mixed bag. In the first year of the *Daily Mail's* operation, Northcliffe's overenthusiasm for reputations established in America led him to hire S. J. Pryor, an Englishman who had become a wire service operative in New York. Pryor was groomed to become the *Mail's*

editor, but the plan failed to work out. Northcliffe placed him in competition with Thomas Marlowe for the editorship, and Marlowe won the prize. Pryor moved on to the *Daily Express*.[67]

Other high-level hirings had better results. R. D. Blumenfeld, who had edited Bennett's New York *Evening Telegraph* and went on to become the New York *Herald*'s correspondent in London, was news editor of the *Mail*'s arch-rival, the *Daily Express*, for 30 years and was known as the "doyen of Fleet Street editors."[68]

Northcliffe's most valuable import probably was Pomeroy Burton, former news editor of Pulitzer's *World*. Burton was lured away in 1907, and his efficiency led to his becoming general manager of Northcliffe's newspapers.[69]

Alexander Kenealy, who had worked for the New York *Herald*, led Northcliffe's *Daily Mirror* to enormous financial success after the initial stages in which the proprietor eliminated defects. Like Blumenfeld and Kenealy, W. L. Warden "bounded off the Gordon Bennett bat onto the Northcliffe wicket" and rose to be editor of the *Continental Daily Mail* in Paris. An American expatriate with the name of Marine Dubbs brought vigor to the Northcliffe circulation department.[70]

Northcliffe's hiring of Alfred Butes, a young English secretary to Pulitzer, brought about a complete alienation between the two publishers in 1907. The American put the blame on the supposed seducer: "I always knew you were a hard man, but I didn't think you would steal a dog from a blind man." So deep was Pulitzer's trust in and companionship with Butes that he had designated the young man to become a trustee of his estate and receive a large legacy had he stayed. Northcliffe apparently was not guilty as charged; Butes had wanted to return home. Northcliffe fully appreciated his good luck, calling Butes "the best secretary God ever made."[71]

The Encyclopedia Fiasco

An effort to draw on American resources that brought intense embarrassment to Northcliffe was his endeavor to publish a British edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana* to compete with the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which had been bought by Americans but had been sold successfully in Britain through sponsorship by the *Times* of London. This was the sort of situation which Northcliffe already had exploited often.

The *Americana*'s owners induced Northcliffe to adapt their books to the English taste, and Northcliffe set nearly a score of editors to the rewriting task. As they combed through the 16,000 pages they found that much of the material had been lifted from British encyclopedias in violation of copyright law. After wasting several thousand pounds, the project was abandoned as unworkable.[72]

The Lender

RAPID development of Northcliffe's role as a national leader and the approach of middle age were accompanied by a tempering of his imitativeness and the beginning of a phase dominated by the transmitting rather than the receiving of trans-Atlantic influences.

The Tabloid World *Edition*

The first day of the 20th Century can be marked as the high point of the watershed dividing the lending from the borrowing phase. On that day Northcliffe in effect introduced tabloid journalism to the United States.[73] Certainly America had seen small-page newspapers before, but none had the impact that Northcliffe's foray did.

Northcliffe arrived in New York in December, 1900, and was invited by Joseph Pulitzer to edit the *World* for one day, choosing the issue of January 1, 1901. It was Pulitzer's idea of a good stunt to have various notable English editors run the *World* for a day, although the timing of Northcliffe's invitation was meant to be a signal honor.[74] Northcliffe remarked to the *World* staff: "I don't suppose any great newspaper proprietor in the world except Mr. Pulitzer would entrust his entire plant for one day to the discretion of a young man who has no other recommendation than some little success 3,000 miles away." But apparently Pulitzer viewed it only as an experiment and even before the edition came out he was sour on the idea. At any rate the publisher kept to his reclusive habits and stayed away from the office.[75]

The scene in the *World* newsroom well reflected the visitor's fabled flamboyance. The Pulitzer Building was surrounded by a brilliant display of fireworks, and the staff members were so caught up in the spirit that they came to work in evening clothes as a joke. The city editor, Pomeroy Burton, thought the dressing-up stunt was a silly affectation and refused to join in. But North-

cliffe took that as part of the joke and remarked: "That man has the right sense of humor. He shows originality, too." In a few years Burton joined Northcliffe's organization.[76]

Northcliffe informed the staff members that they would be putting out "the newspaper of the 20th Century"—a four-column tabloid such as had been tried unsuccessfully in 1891 by Frank Munsey in New York and in 1896 by Newnes in London.[77] Its 24 pages were 18 inches deep and nine inches wide. Its lead story was on the arrival of the new century and the celebration which marked it on the streets of New York. No story was allowed to run more than 250 words, and pictures were banished.[78]

The excitement in the newsroom built up to a peak at midnight, when William H. Merrill, Pulitzer's chief editorial writer, broke out champagne and called a halt to toast Northcliffe. He told the gathering that Pulitzer admired Northcliffe immensely and saw in him a master craftsman. That evening might prove to be "an epoch-making international episode in the history of journalism," he proclaimed, and he spoke of the possibility that the tabloid experiment might start a change which would mean "our blanket sheets shall in time become napkin sheets." Northcliffe responded with thanks to a staff which he said was unique in its ability to make such drastic changes almost without warning.[79]

An Appeal to America

But Northcliffe appeared to be more concerned with impressing the American public than with wooing the *World* staff. He printed this manifesto on the editorial page:

> I have come to the United States to exchange ideas on journalism, to learn, and to suggest. The editor . . . has given me complete control . . . for twenty-four hours, and . . . I shall appear, to-morrow, to the fair, able, and intellectual discrimination for which Americans are noted the world over. I feel confident that my system of portable, pocketable, logically arranged journalism will meet with careful consideration, and that from the invitation I shall make to the American people to offer suggestions as to what is wanted in the newspapers of the twentieth century I shall receive invaluable advice.

He also claimed that the tabloid size would be "an advantage to advertisers . . . convenient for reading in the street car or for carrying in the pocket."[80]

Northcliffe sang the virtues of condensation highest of all and predicted that it would become "the feature" of the future newspaper.

> In fact, we have educated the British public to appreciate condensed news, and you will come to it, in this country, in time. American business men have told me that they cannot read half the stories in the newspapers, because the articles are much too long. They simply read the headlines. This is why I say that American newspapers . . . are too unwieldy.[81]

No doubt Northcliffe was aware that, 25 years before, Charles A. Dana of the New York *Sun* had maintained that the American newspaper reader was demanding that his material be presented not "in solid chunks, but so condensed and clarified that he shall be relieved of the necessity of wading through a treatise to get a fact or spending time on a dilated essay to get a bite at the argument."[82]

Perhaps presaging the *Reader's Digest,* Northcliffe called for the hiring of a special staff of editors who would condense all good new books from all countries.[83]

Sales of the *World* soared by 100,000 the morning the tabloid appeared, and extra press runs were ordered. A few kind words trickled in from publishers and from others such as Northcliffe's friend Thomas A. Edison.[84] But the "invaluable advice" Northcliffe had sought from his readers was overwhelmingly negative. One subscriber was quoted as saying that "the best thing about Mr. Harmsworth's experiment is that Mr. Pulitzer limited it to one day. It would not last over 30 days."[85]

Most of the criticism centered on Northcliffe's insistence on condensation. "Americans do not want to take their roast beef in 'essence' nor their drinks in capsules," said one.[86] The prestigious Springfield *Republican* sniffed that Northcliffe had taught Americans "nothing not already amply considered by American newspapers and publishers." R. H. Chapman, editor of the Los Angeles *Herald,* gave this verdict: "People should be allowed to select from a large body of news and no one has a right to limit it or cut it down for them."[87]

As vociferous as the attack on condensation was, it counted not nearly so much in publishers' rejection of the tabloid as did the

concern for the burgeoning role of advertisements. Northcliffe's prediction that advertisers would flock to the new format found few supporters.[88]

Cold-eyed Frank A. Munsey would have none of it: "The large sheet is not only easier to read but is more impressive, while it also gives advertisers greater room. What is still more important is the fact that the small paper is not a money bringer."[89]

Surviving the Defeat

Northcliffe's defeat at the bar of American expert opinion did not remove him from the public eye. On the contrary, he became "good copy" from then on whenever he made his frequent visits. The tabloid experiment had "fixed him in the American imagination. Henceforward he was listened to with even more attention in the United States than in his own country."[90]

Nor did his enthusiasm for the tabloid concept flag. He returned home and began laying plans for his own version, which came forth in 1903 as the *Daily Mirror,* first as a paper published by and for women but soon converted to a popular-appeal publication for both sexes. He also overcame his aversion to illustrations and pioneered in solving the mechanical problems which had inhibited the adoption of photoengraving.

Northcliffe continued bombarding American publishers with his arguments for condensed journalism even after he shocked the profession with the purchase of the venerable *Times* of London in 1908 and kept it on its dignified path. The growing success of the *Daily Mirror* no doubt bolstered his case for brevity. As World War I ended, the idea of trying to publish a tabloid was making headway in New York, and the *Mirror* was the working model.[91]

According to a legend in the trade, the plan for New York's first modern tabloid, the *Daily News,* had its genesis in a French farmyard during the war. Two cousins who had inherited the Chicago *Tribune,* Col. Robert R. McCormick and Capt. Joseph M. Patterson, held a rendezvous, supposedly atop a manure pile. Patterson told McCormick of a conference with Northcliffe, and the captain said he would like to give New York its own picture newspaper after the war. McCormick, eager for more elbow room in Chicago, agreed to help Patterson in the project.

Apparently the Patterson-Northcliffe conference had a direct bearing on the cousins' decision. The captain had been impressed by the circulation of the *Mirror,* then at 800,000 and growing rapidly.

The British press lord had opined that New York would be a good field for a similar venture. He was not alone in this notion, nor was Patterson the only American journalist to agree with him; among others, William Randolph Hearst and Arthur Brisbane were mulling the idea of a New York daily patterned after the *Daily Mirror.*[92]

Soon after the *Daily News* was born, Northcliffe visited New York, was shown a copy and was asked to give his verdict on the paper his *Mirror* had inspired. Wearing white gloves, he leafed through the paper and looked with disdain at the smudges the abundant black ink had left on his fingertips.

"You'll have to fix that," he murmured, and that was his only comment to the crestfallen editors who had been hoping for some kind words.[93]

The Ambassador

ONCE while visiting in the United States, Northcliffe made a point of calling on an official of the New York Zoological Society. He had no special interest in animals, but he was fascinated by all things American. In this case, he wanted to experiment with carrying the American robin and the gray squirrel to a new habitat in England, using the grounds of his newly acquired stately mansion for the test.[94]

The trans-Atlantic journalistic influences promoted by Northcliffe were carried out with the same enthusiasm he took to the matter of the robins and squirrels. From his first American voyage in 1894 to his last in 1921, he acted as a pied piper of ideas, people and sometimes inventions flowing in both directions.

His visits had another significance: he was, in his own talkative, friendly and restless person, a major medium of communication himself. Whether fishing in Florida, hobnobbing with presidents and editors or speaking to crowds, he transmitted to many Americans more about Britain than they would ever learn from the impersonal media, and when he returned home he was listened to as an authoritative interpreter of the United States.

Comparisons With Americans

As has been demonstrated, Northcliffe's imitative posture toward American journalism waned as he approached middle age. His always robust self-assurance also was reaching its zenith, and it served him well as an ego-armor when he began to associate with American press moguls as a colleague, not a neophyte. During his turn-of-the-century visit, noted American correspondent Julian Ralph was moved to compare him with Pulitzer, Hearst, the younger Bennett and Munsey, concluding: "Harmsworth stands out, easy, well-controlled and polished in manner, the most prepossessing and picturesque figure in journalism on either side of the Atlantic."[95]

It would have taken a much less vain man than Northcliffe to avoid letting such praise go to his head. He became steadily more critical of American journalistic techniques and more sensitive to implications that Britishers were marching to a foreign drumbeat. While usually tactful abroad, he could be blunt about the matter at home. Referring to the galaxy of publishers with whom Ralph had compared him, he told a London intimate: "I know, in my own newspaper business, that there are a lot of mugs running big newspapers in America who wouldn't have a chance here."[96]

Thus Northcliffe kept a close watch on his territorial interests. One of the reasons he launched a Paris edition of the *Daily Mail* was his being irked by the idea that Bennett's branch of the *Herald* there was threatening to gain a monopoly of English-speaking readers on the European continent. (It is ironic that, early in his career, his aggressiveness was compared with that of Bennett.) He also was spurred in his lust to buy the *Times* of London by a rumor that an American syndicate was moving into the bidding for the proud but faltering flagship of Fleet Street.[97]

Americans often suspected Northcliffe himself of coveting the gold mined in the canyons of New York City. On a U. S. visit in 1917, he scoffed at the suggestion, maintaining that no man can manage a newspaper by cable, and he indulged in a bit of flattery: "For a foreigner to compete from a distance with your live and vigorous press would be an act of brief and expensive foolishness." But the rumor persisted, and when he sent a subordinate to New York in 1920, the visitor found that many journalists were probing him to find out when his employer was going to attack.[98]

Never known as an elegant stylist himself, Northcliffe nevertheless acquired, along with the sobering trust of running the *Times*, a delicate palate for figures of speech. He scolded a too-breezy *Times* editor:

> Above all, do not use any Americanisms. . . . Somebody should stand by with a coke-hammer and smash every American and other foreign word that tries to get into the building. Our own language is quite good enough. American is very amusing to talk, but it should not be allowed to be printed in the *Times*.[99]

He worried that his own speech was becoming corrupted by frequent association with Americans, that he was losing his ability to express himself in "correct English." The direction of his

peevishness was not consistent. At one point he would chide the colonials for pretentiousness—"They seem to have a natural desire to use the longest words possible: why 'typewriter operator' instead of typist? Why should every little shop be a 'market,' the long word 'elevator' be used instead of lift?" But soon afterward he would lash out at the use of "drafted" to mean conscripted, and he would lay such slovenliness as "stunt," "boom" and "slump" to the evil influence of America.[100]

Over the years of his trans-Atlantic visits, his status as a newsworthy celebrity grew steadily, inflated by his liberality with trenchant comments. Clearly he enjoyed the attention, but he could not resist a comparison of the bumptiousness of American reporters with the more genteel ways of their British cousins. During one expedition, he complained in print that he found it "quite impossible to control newspaper writers here: if you say nothing they say it for you. They say what they think. . . . At the two houses where I was entertained yesterday . . . they made themselves a nuisance."[101]

Contacts With Pulitzer

Considering the wanderlust common at the time among press magnates, most with money to burn, it would have been unusual if Northcliffe did not come into contact with the Americans with whom he was compared. So it happened, and the confrontations left vivid images on all sides.

The contacts of the upstart Englishman with an aging Pulitzer were a stormy mixture of admiration and bad blood. Beginning with the experimental tabloid fiasco in 1901, Pulitzer took keen note of Northcliffe, bracketing him with two other publishers whose papers he felt were the nearest rivals in quality to his own *World*.[102]

Pulitzer like Northcliffe was afflicted with a certain measure of professional jingoism, and he often lectured one of his many English secretaries on the subject:

> "You mustn't think that because you've written for the London *Times* you are competent to write for the *World*. . . . The American people want something terse, forcible, picturesque, striking, something that will arrest their attention, enlist their sympathy, arouse their indignation, stimulate their imagination, convince their reason, awaken

their conscience. . . . The *World* isn't like your *Times,* with its forty or fifty thousand readers. It's read by, well, say a million people a day. . . ."[103]

This defensiveness about sensationalism was balanced by a fierce pride in the American newspapers' quest for accuracy. Pulitzer boasted of having read English and Continental papers for years, and he had concluded that "the press of America as a whole has a higher standard of accuracy than the European press as a whole."

"I will go further than that. I will say that line for line, the American newspapers *attain* a higher standard of news than the European newspapers; . . . although there are in Europe a few newspapers, and they are chiefly English, which are as accurate as the best newspapers in America, there are *no* newspapers in America which are so habitually, so criminally stuffed with fake news as the worst of the European papers."[104]

The much-mourned defection of Pulitzer's private secretary, Alfred Butes, to work for Northcliffe caused the blind American to break off all relations with the tempter. Regardless of who was responsible, Northcliffe liked to brag about his putting one over the older man. This probably resulted more from awe than ill will. Northcliffe was known to indulge in name-dropping in regard to Pulitzer, talking of how they "compared notes" or prefacing his dicta with "As Mr. Pulitzer used to say. . . ."[105]

By the time of Pulitzer's death in 1911, Northcliffe was beginning to feel the effects of overwork and the wounds of professional and political warfare. It was on just such tribulations in Pulitzer's life that Northcliffe dwelled when he wrote a generous obituary that ran more than a column in the *Daily Mail.* He wrote of Pulitzer's "rare faculty of viewing things exactly as they are" even when supporting unpopular causes such as in the Venezuelan border dispute, which "brought upon him abuse, a temporary loss of subscribers . . . and the violence of general public attack." Critics had been unable to impugn Pulitzer's public acts so had turned to "minor blemishes that naturally occur in an organization carried on by one whose health necessitates continued absence from his affairs."[106] This had a startling resemblance to the complaints Northcliffe was voicing about his own career.

Contacts With Hearst

Hearst's relationships with Northcliffe apparently were less intense than Pulitzer's, but the evidence indicates that Hearst's regard for the Britisher grew over the years while Northcliffe's for him diminished. Perhaps jealous of the notoriety connected with the new-century tabloid edition of the *World,* Hearst gibed editorially at the visitor: "Would you like to look at Mr. Harmsworth? Imagine a face that presents a mixture of Napoleon, Edison and the left-handed cherub leaning over the frame of Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna.' " Noting that Northcliffe was trying to buy the *Times* of London—a "great paper"—he wrote that the Britisher owned no such paper then. And, taking a swipe at the *World,* he proposed: "May he get the *Times;* and when he gets it, may he show us the real Harmsworth editing a real newspaper."[107]

By the time of Northcliffe's special War Mission to the United States seventeen years later, Hearst's tone had become deferential if not obsequious. A news story in the New York *American,* nearly a column long, saluted the emissary's arrival:

> Great Britain's human dynamo . . . arrived in America yesterday . . . and his coming yesterday was in the nature of getting back home. . . .
>
> The man who upset two Cabinets and woke up the English people issued a brief statement and buckled down to his job, characteristically. . . . He throws off enough surplus energy to keep a couple of ordinary men going. . . . He vaguely suggests Napoleon in his looks and he has many of the mannerisms of Roosevelt.[108]

Other incidents during the five-month mission suggest that Hearst, whose public image was badly mauled by charges that he was pro-Axis, tried to identify himself with Northcliffe's unassailable orthodoxy of war spirit. When the Britisher provided to the New York *Sun* a column he wrote about his admiration for U. S. troop training, the *American* reprinted it on its editorial page.[109]

The courtship changed for the worse when Northcliffe found himself seated beside Hearst at a banquet. The visitor turned to Hearst and blurted out: "You are fooling your readers!"

> Hearst, he declared for all to hear, was "backing the wrong horse." The Allies were going to win the war—"and you ought to know it." Hearst sat back in his chair like a suddenly winded man. Regaining his composure, he may have conveniently remembered Pulitzer's offer

to Northcliffe in the first year of the century. "Very well, Lord Northcliffe," he said in his unattractive falsetto, "I'll give you the freedom of the New York *American* editorial page for one day. You can write what you like in it." Bringing his fist down on the table with a bang, Northcliffe accepted the offer.[110]

The apparent result of this agreement was not what Hearst suggested that it be, but rather an elaborate exercise in coattail-grabbing. Shortly before Northcliffe's return to London, the *American* spread across the top of its editorial page an Associated Press account of a speech he made to 200 Midwestern editors in Kansas City. It was headed "WAKE UP, AMERICA!" and was set entirely in headline-sized type.

According to the AP story, Northcliffe "asserted that American newspapers are presenting the news of the war in an erroneous manner" by their reports that internal dissension in Germany would bring the war to a short and easy conclusion. Although a third of the Germans were "sickened of war," he was quoted as saying, the dominant two-thirds were resolute for the fight.

The rest of the page, devoid of the standing columns and cartoon, was taken up with an editorial asserting that the Hearst papers had been criticized for saying nothing but what Northcliffe had said.

> But, of course, neither the small-minded publishers nor the short-sighted politicians will bring any false and scandalous accusations against Northcliffe on account of his having publicly and in the most earnest manner reiterated the warnings and the statements of the Hearst newspapers.

Throughout most of the editorial's 48 paragraphs, it restated the same theme, ending on a note of condescension toward the misguided editors who had doubted Hearst but now could see the error of their ways: "Try not to be small-minded about the Hearst papers or about anything else in this crucial hour. Consider only our dear country's success and safety."[111]

During the last months of Northcliffe's life in 1922, as mental illness was closing in on him, he showed what may have been his true feelings about Hearst. It was announced in the United States that Hearst and his wife were going to England and that Northcliffe would present them to the king. "I can only think that the fellow who made that announcement has gone quite mad,"

the press lord commented. Then he dashed off to Germany, giving an escape from the Hearst problem as a reason for leaving.[112]

Despite these slights, Hearst often displayed a respect for Northcliffe before and after death. One authority cites the precedent of Northcliffe's publication of *Answers* for Hearst's introduction of a column called Letters From the Lovelorn in the New York *Journal*.[113] Hearst sent one of his chief lieutenants to study the *Daily Mail* for two weeks in 1926. The visitor found that the English papers "excelled us in their intelligent and intensive condensation of the news. Mechanically, they topped us in clean printing, particularly the printing of photographs."[114]

Looking back on Northcliffe's career, Hearst gave him the credit for being the originator of tabloid journalism, reserving for Dana the title of originator of "the intelligently condensed newspaper" and noting that Northcliffe had conceded that he had modeled the *Daily Mail* on Dana's ideas. Hearst recalled "the astonishing success" of his rival's *Daily Mirror* as a condensed paper and admitted scoffing when Northcliffe put out the tabloid edition of the *World*. "All of us newspaper men smiled patronizingly but continued to make our voluminous newspapers. It was not until years later that the success of the tabloid in England compelled its adoption in this country."[115]

Contacts with Ochs and Scripps

Northcliffe and Adolph Ochs, publisher of the New York *Times*, appear to have admired each other, at least when they were not feuding. Once when Carr Van Anda, Ochs' managing editor, visited the *Daily Mail*, the editor pulled from his desk drawer a copy of the famous edition of the *Times* in which it had covered the sinking of the *Titanic* with astounding speed, accuracy and completeness. Van Anda was told: "We keep this as an example of the greatest accomplishment in news reporting."[116]

Ochs depended on the *Times* of London for a European news service during the approach of World War I, but by 1914 he had developed his offices in London and Paris enough to be prepared when he and Northcliffe fell into a bitter dispute. According to Ochs' biographer, Gerald Johnson:

> He was now getting European news written by Americans for American readers, and while its factual content did not differ appre-

ciably from the British service the shift in emphasis and the difference in idiomatic structure made it clearer and therefore more informative to Americans than the best British news writing.[117]

Despite his declaration of independence, Ochs hedged his bets through a news exchange agreement with Northcliffe's competitor, the London *Chronicle,* whose reporters included such stars as Philip Gibbs.

Such minor collaboration with British newspapers nevertheless brought accusations against Ochs. Amid the pre-war concern that Britain might be subverting American neutrality, Ochs faced the charge that the New York *Times* was being controlled by British interests. The newspaper's official historian denies this, saying that the news exchanges were "the full extent" of the co-operation. Van Anda was called before a congressional investigative committee in 1915 to explain the matter.[118]

In Northcliffe's last, mad days, the personal breach between the two publishers was bridged to some extent. It was reported that Ochs was gratified when, during a visit to Paris, Northcliffe rushed to the hotel and demanded to talk with him.[119]

Northcliffe's contacts with newspaper chain owner E. W. Scripps were relatively minimal; their only meeting seems to have been in Washington in June, 1917, when Northcliffe was opening his War Mission campaign for American support. They conferred for two hours, and upon departing Northcliffe remarked to Scripps' associate, Roy Howard: "He's a belligerent old tiger, isn't he?"[120]

But Scripps had long displayed an admiration for Northcliffe, quoting his opinions and calling him "brilliant . . . and successful" in 1908. Even after the Washington conference, the "old tiger" was soon dropping Northcliffe's name in his writings. He also expressed pride that Howard had won Northcliffe's friendship during the World War I expansion of United Press; owing to the press lord's assistance, Scripps wrote, Howard had become favored by the leaders of England "above all other American journalists and journalistic institutions."[121]

Other Channels

Aside from his relationships with American press lords, Northcliffe's role as a personal mediator of information and ideas across the ocean took on an immense variety of forms.[122] The names of

many distinguished guests were found in the guest book at the Northcliffe mansion. Even traveling baseball teams such as the White Sox and Giants were entertained there.[123]

It was inevitable that two such outgoing personalities as Northcliffe and Theodore Roosevelt would come to a confrontation. Their first meeting was in 1908 when the press lord took his wife and mother to visit Roosevelt in the White House. Some biographers say they formed a lasting friendship, but one disagrees:

> They were in truth too much alike to enjoy one another's society. Both superficial in most of their judgments, both impatient of contradiction, both gifted with dramatic temperament, they clashed instead of flowing together. Both were fascinating to everybody else; on each other they jarred.[124]

Emergence of an Expert

Such a breadth of contacts with persons and things American led Northcliffe into a confidence that he was perhaps the leading British expert on American affairs. He could in turn be openly admiring, archly condescending and harshly critical of Americans. He set the tone for a long series of later contacts when, as a young tycoon, he visited the United States in 1901. Writing to his mother, he boasted that "distinguished people from all parts of the United States have come here to meet me." He mused that such attention would help him in business, although he ridiculed the American reporters for their slavish exaggeration of his merits.[125]

Northcliffe frequently sent reporters to the United States so his readers could share his insights. The popular G. W. Steevens reported on the McKinley-Bryan election campaign of 1896. A leading figure in the organization, Tom Clarke, was sent over to study the business in 1920. Clarke's employer counseled him that Americans considered theirs "the greatest country in the world" and that he must "speak with wide-eyed admiration: you've got to be impressed with all this bigness and drive. . . . Of course, you can forget it all immediately you set foot in Southampton again." He looked forward to adding to his staff newsmen who understood America. "It will help us avoid a lot of the nonsense that gets into the British papers—including our own—about the United States."[126]

Northcliffe's friendship for America was tempered with a keen sensitivity to its dissimilarities with Britain. He called Americans "white Chinese" in deriding what he saw as their conformism: "They cut their hair the same way, eat exactly the same breakfasts, tie up the small girls' curls with precisely the same kind of ribbon fashioned into bows exactly similar. In every way they all try to look and act as much like each other as they can."[127]

In drawing comparisons between the two countries, Northcliffe advised his emissaries that they would offend their hosts if they wrote or talked about "this 'blood is thicker than water' nonsense." He felt that Americans shared his view that the two peoples were not cousins: "No more cousins than Chinese and Japanese! Our cousins are the Germans. That's why we can't get on with 'em."[128]

The War Mission

In June, 1917, Northcliffe became a special envoy to the United States as head of the British War Mission, and for six months he was in charge of buying supplies and generally drumming up American support for the war. He accepted the appointment because of his confidence in himself as the pre-eminent analyst of American affairs and his experience as an executive.[129] But he saw the assignment as a high point in his career:

> My task is a terrific one and most delicate. I am sent forth literally to *beg* for assistance of all kinds and in colossal quantities and from a people whom certain of our public men and journals have attacked up till the last few weeks. Most fortunately, I have never allowed any criticism to appear in my Press.[130]

Once on American soil, he set out on a ceaseless round of public events of all kinds, from speeches at auditoriums to strolls at expositions. He made a special effort to make friends with newspapermen, and his address to them in Kansas City was well received despite his criticism of their war coverage. According to a report of the meeting, "He talks to them as one journalist to another. As for the matter of discourse, though it be not profound, they receive it reverentially. Is this not the most important man in England?" Aside from talking with journalists, he provided them with copy, promoting the Allied cause through articles contributed to newspapers and magazines.[131]

Northcliffe gave fellow publishers a more direct show of friendship. They were suffering from a war-caused newsprint shortage, and the press lord had acquired some highly productive paper mills in Newfoundland. He agreed to send the output to the United States at lower prices than were paid for domestic production.[132]

So aggressively did he go about his chores in America that he returned home drained and weakened, and his associates saw it as the beginning of the decline that led to his death four years later. But despite the physical toll, he exulted in the memory of his personal triumph in diplomacy and his even more inflated reputation for expertise about the United States. He complained that he was pestered by letters from all sorts of people upon his return, asking about his observations. "The English know less of the United States than they do of Spain. . . . We are living on views of the United States of a quarter of a century ago," he remarked.[133]

The Balance Sheet

NORTHCLIFFE'S contemporary critics often saw in him a puerile imitativeness of Napoleon. Both made their marks at an early age and still were tormented with the challenge of victories yet unwon. Both came from humble beginnings and gloried in the rarefied air to which they ascended. Northcliffe was said to have tried on Napoleon's hat once to compare the fit, and he emulated the emperor in signing his papers "N" and putting an image of bees in his coat of arms.

But Northcliffe had no St. Helena; death took him at the peak of his power, and there is little evidence of his ruminating at length about his place in history. He was too busy achieving to tot up his achievements. Furthermore, the goals he aspired to were always immediate ones. He seemed to lack the capacity to think of himself as a potential shaper of world development; he got his real exhilaration from founding or buying specific publications or from influencing certain government actions.

If his significance is to be measured by the dimensions he valued, Northcliffe's career must be marked up as an interesting but transient episode in history. The newspapers he founded or bought—the *Times,* the *Daily Mail,* the *Evening News* and the *Daily Mirror*—all still were alive in the 1970s but had passed through so many hands there remained no semblance of the Northcliffe stamp.

So it is to more abstract criteria that the historian must turn to find relevance in the life of Northcliffe for today's world. In brief, would journalism in Britain and the United States be different today had been no Northcliffe?

The evidence presented here tends to support a cautious "yes." No British publisher approached Northcliffe's success at spinning the cotton-candy fluff of popular journalism in the period in which it emerged. There were others in the field, but they offered him

relatively little competition in contrast with the Pulitzer-Hearst battles in the United States.

Consequently, when one turns to the central question of this study—Northcliffe's place in trans-Atlantic journalistic influences—it must be recognized that his role as an innovator in his own country is roughly equivalent those of Dana, Pulitzer, Hearst and Ochs together in the United States. But this very eclecticism inevitably led to the result that he was lesser in the things that each of the others did best. He had less finesse at dealing in human interest than Dana did, less acuteness as an editorial thinker than Pulitzer, less skill at technical improvement than Hearst and less patience in institution-building than Ochs.

It has been demonstrated in this study that Northcliffe drew more from American journalistic lore in his early career than he gave. His major imports were condensation, frivolous subject matter and attractive visual design. He exported in return a working example of how these could be focused into a relatively untried format—the tabloid newspaper.

But the same evidence can be conceptualized in a different manner if one considers the wane of sensationalism in the United States after the Yellow Journalism period of the late 1890s. Northcliffe kept the torch raised high after it flickered and dimmed across the ocean. When America emerged from the nightmare of World War I, its more enterprising publishers had before them the proof that popular journalism was not just a passing fancy, that it had found a steady source of fuel in Britain and was blazing as brightly as ever.

So when Patterson started the new wave of sensationalism in New York with his *Daily News,* it was neither a bold new experiment nor an attempt to mend the broken toys of Yellow Journalism. It was simply a replication of Northcliffe's experience with the *Daily Mirror* and, to a lesser extent, the *Daily Mail.*

It is extravagant, of course, to say that the American tabloid excesses of the 1920s would not have occurred without Northcliffe's example. But it is unlikely that they would have come so rapidly, with such assurance on the part of their creators.

Northcliffe's role as a cross-cultural communicator also has been examined in these pages. In some ways he fitted into the lineage of Dickens, Mrs. Trollope, Twain and Henry James as intercontinental interpreters. Although less incisive than any of these,

he no doubt surpassed them in the extent to which his observations reached the broad masses of people in both countries. Like the others he saw that the cultural barriers between the nations could not be overcome simply by more communication, but unlike them his heart never accepted what his mind knew, so he never tired of pontificating about one people to another.

It is clear that Northcliffe played the role of a colossus bestriding the Atlantic for his own advantage, but there remains ample evidence that his affection for America went far beyond the narrow bounds of cupidity. The sentiment was genuine, although often expressed in abrasive ways.

> If ever the Americans had a real friend outside their own country it was Northcliffe; if ever there was a sound and sensible advocate of Anglo-American friendship it was Northcliffe. His fault . . . was that he ran counter to many who really shared his views but did not like his methods, just as he did not like theirs.[134]

NOTES

[1] Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), pp. 1-42; Edwin Emery, *The Press and America*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), pp. 1-16; John Hohenberg, *Free Press/Free People: the Best Cause* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), and *Foreign Correspondence: the Great Reporters and Their Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

[2] Harmsworth was born a commoner but was elevated to the "meritocracy" in 1905 when he was well advanced in his career, although he was the youngest peer ever created to that time. To avoid confusion, he will be referred to throughout this work as Northcliffe.

[3] Emery, 554-5; Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), pp. 666-7.

[4] Bleyer, 3.

[5] Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1959), p. 199; Harold Herd, *The March of Journalism* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952), p. 240.

[6] H. R. Fox-Bourne, *English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism*, Vol. 1 (London: Russell and Russell, 1887), p. 49.

[7] Bleyer, 15-16.

[8] *Ibid.*, 21.

[9] Herd, 148.

[10] *Ibid.*, 128-87.

[11] Helen H. Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1940), p. 148.

[12] Herd, 163.

[13] *Ibid.*, 228.

[14] Pound and Harmsworth, 169.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Herd, 253; Mott, 580.

[17] Tom Clarke, *Northcliffe in History* (New York: Hutchinson and Company Ltd., 1950), p. 146.

[18] Tom Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1931), p. 20.

[19] Alfred Patrick Ryan, *Lord Northcliffe* (London: W. Collins and Sons and Company, 1953), p. 14.

[20] Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary*, 21.

[21] Pound and Harmsworth, 33-9.

[22] *Ibid.*, 39.

[23] Clarke, *Northcliffe in History*, 14.

[24] Pound and Harmsworth, 190.

[25] *Ibid.*, 181.

[26] Clarke, *Diary*, 15.

[27] T. S. Matthews, *The Sugar Pill: An Essay on Newspapers* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1958), p. 177.

[28] Clarke, *Diary*, 15.

[29] Ryan, 76; Pound and Harmsworth, 250; Clarke, *Diary*, 200.

[30] Pound and Harmsworth, 250.

[31] Hughes, 148.

[32] Clarke, *Diary*, 199-200.

[33] Pound and Harmsworth, 65.

[34] *Ibid.*, 116, 136, 279; Mott, 586.

[35] Pound and Harmsworth, 138; Alfred McClung Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 341.

[36] Pound and Harmsworth, 241.

[37] J. A. C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 169.

[38] Pound and Harmsworth, 259.

[39] Ryan, 155.

[40] Pound and Harmsworth, 33-70; Ryan, 28; Max Pemberton, *Lord Northcliffe, a Memoir* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), p. 34.

[41] Later shortened to *Answers*.

[42] Pound and Harmsworth, 72.

[43] He claimed in later years to have studied French and American journalism "since I was a child." See E. D. Coblentz, ed., *Newsmen Speak: Journalists on Their Craft* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 96. This probably was an exaggeration.

[44] Pound and Harmsworth, 82.

[45] Lee, 283; Pound and Harmsworth, 90, 94.

[46] *Ibid.*, 141.

[47] Emery, 622.

[48] William E. Carson, *Northcliffe: Britain's Man of Power* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1918), p. 296.

[49] *Ibid.*; Pound and Harmsworth, 161.

[50] *Ibid.*, 168.

[51] Ryan, 54.

[52] Pound and Harmsworth, 174-5.

[53] *Ibid.*, 177.

[54] *Ibid.*, 198.

[55] Wilson Harris, former editor of the *Spectator*, quoted in Pound and Harmsworth, 199.

[56] *Ibid.*, 196, 200.

[57] *Ibid.*, 239.

[58] Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (New York: Greenwood Press), pp. 102-6.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] Pound and Harmsworth, 236.

[61] Pemberton, 32, 187.

[62] Pound and Harmsworth, 68.

[63] Herd, 239.

[64] Pound and Harmsworth, 217.

[65] John Alexander Hammerton, *With Northcliffe in Fleet Street* (London: Hutchinson and Company Ltd., 1932), pp. 171-2.

[66] Herd, 243; Pound and Harmsworth, 253, 242; Harry J. Greenwall, *Northcliffe: Napoleon of Fleet Street* (London: Allan Wingate, 1957), pp. 39, 66.

[67] Pound and Harmsworth, 210.

[68] *Ibid.*, 249; Clarke, *In History*, 83.

[69] James W. Barrett, *Joseph Pulitzer and His World* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1941), pp. 181-2; Pound and Harmsworth, 407.

[70] *Ibid.*, 276; Greenwall, 134.

[71] Barrett, 182; Don C. Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer, His Life and Letters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1924), pp. 5-6; Pound and Harmsworth, 302.

[72] Hammerton, 172-5; Greenwall, 81-2.

[73] On some points, descriptions of this episode vary widely. The present account reconstructs it from the most reliable sources.

[74] Greenwall, 44. Mott (p. 666) says Pulitzer and Northcliffe crossed the Atlantic together. However, this is not corroborated by other writers.

[75] Barrett, 181.

[76] Seitz, 237; Carson, 299.

[77] Northcliffe is said to have introduced the word "tabloid" into newspaper jargon. A British chemical firm later threatened suit for copyright infringement. See Pound and Harmsworth, 266.

[78] Barrett, 180; Carson, 300.

[79] Barrett, 181.

[80] Carson, 298-300.

[81] *Ibid.*, 302-3.

[82] *Ibid.*, 304.

[83] *Ibid.*, 300.

[84] *Ibid.*, 301.

[85] Barrett, 181.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] Lee, 154.

[88] Hamilton Fyfe, *Northcliffe: An Intimate Biography* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), p. 154.

[89] Carson, 301-2.

[90] *Ibid.*, 304; Fyfe, *loc. cit.*

[91] John A. Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney: The Informal History of the New York Daily News* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1961), pp. 20, 69.

[92] *Ibid.*, 16.

[93] *Ibid.*, 79.

[94] Pound and Harmsworth, 336.

[95] *Ibid.*, 268.

[96] Clarke, *In History*, 137.

[97] Fyfe, 74; Pound and Harmsworth, 290, 311.

[98] Clarke, *Diary*, 170-71.
[99] Pound and Harmsworth, 347.
[100] *Ibid.*, 568, 617.
[101] Alfred Viscount Northcliffe, *My Journey Round the World* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1923), p. 2.
[102] Emery, 380*n*. The others were William M. Singerly of the Philadelphia *Record* and Charles H. Taylor of the Boston *Globe*.
[103] Alleyne Ireland, *An Adventure With a Genius* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1920), p. 68.
[104] *Ibid.*, 111-12.
[105] See Coblentz, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
[106] W. A. Swanberg, *Pulitzer* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 412; Pound and Harmsworth, 422.
[107] *Ibid.*, 268.
[108] New York *American*, June 12, 1917, p. 3.
[109] *Ibid.*, September 18, 1917, p. 16.
[110] Pound and Harmsworth, 549.
[111] New York *American*, October 29, 1917, p. 16.
[112] Greenwall, 221; Clarke, *Diary*, 281; Pound and Harmsworth, 857.
[113] Hughes, 180.
[114] Coblentz, 88-9.
[115] *Selections From the Writings and Speeches of William Randolph Hearst* (San Francisco: privately published, 1948), p. 308.
[116] Meyer Berger, *The Story of the New York Times: 1851-1951* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1951), p. 201.
[117] Gerald W. Johnson, *An Honorable Titan* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 242.
[118] Berger, 208, 212-13.
[119] Johnson, 263.
[120] Negley D. Cochran, *E. W. Scripps* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), p. 168.
[121] Oliver Knight, ed., *I Protest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), pp. 238, 311, 567.
[122] Some examples are noted in Ryan, 153; Pound and Harmsworth, 354; Fyfe, 143; Herd, 244.
[123] Pound and Harmsworth, 274; Carson, 293.
[124] Fyfe, 154-5; see also Pound and Harmsworth, 293.
[125] Pound and Harmsworth, 269.
[126] Clarke, *Diary*, 161, 171.
[127] Fyfe, 155.
[128] *Ibid.*; Ryan, 101; Clarke, *Diary*, 161.
[129] Carson, 369; Ryan, 136.
[130] Pound and Harmsworth, 536.
[131] Fyfe, 218; Carson, 380.
[132] *Ibid.*, 317-18.
[133] Herd, 247; Pound and Harmsworth, 605.
[134] Clarke, *Diary*, 24.

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